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THE DIRECTOR OF  
CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

National Intelligence Officers

17 February 1981

NOTE TO: Richard Pipes  
National Security Council  
Europe, USSR and East-West

FROM : Robert M. Gates  
National Intelligence Officer for USSR-EE

*Dick-*

Attached are several papers on the current Soviet internal political scene and preparations for the Party Congress, as you requested last Friday. Although some of the items were prepared as primers for senior officials in the new Administration and may thus be elementary for you, there is probably enough current information to justify your scanning them. For the most current picture of the internal political situation, I especially recommend "Review of Soviet Internal Affairs." (S)

Although we are planning an article in the current intelligence publications at the end of this week summarizing Congress preparations, I will forward anything of interest that crosses my desk as quickly as possible. (C)

*RMG*  
Robert M. Gates

Attachments:  
As Stated

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REVIEW ON FEB87  
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Central Intelligence Agency  
National Foreign Assessment Center  
October 1980-January 1981

REVIEW OF SOVIET INTERNAL AFFAIRS

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Domestic Politics

President Brezhnev appears to be at the height of his political power as preparations for holding the 26th Party Congress in February move into high gear. The departure of Aleksey Kosygin from the political scene in October after 16 years as head of government was the most significant single personnel change in this status quo regime since Khrushchev's ouster in 1964. A number of high-level changes in government personnel have ensued, and more are likely. The effect on the power configuration within the policymaking Politburo, while less visible, is considerable. Nevertheless, because Brezhnev has been the main beneficiary of the changes so far, the forthcoming Congress is shaping up as one of consolidation rather than transition to a successor regime.

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Kosygin Joins the Innumerable Caravan

The circumstances of Kosygin's physical decline since last summer support the official explanation for his retirement. With a history of heart trouble, the premier evidently suffered his second heart attack in less than a year last

*This review is based on information and analysis available at CIA's National Foreign Assessment Center through 29 January 1981. It takes a fresh or even speculative look at events and trends in the USSR, with a broader perspective than the dictates of current intelligence normally permit. The analysts named at the end of each section are principally responsible for the judgments expressed therein; each contributor's office has ensured that they are consistent with fully coordinated intelligence. Comments are welcome and may be addressed to the Chief, Soviet Internal Branch, USSR-EE Division, Office of Political Analysis, Room 6 G 22, CIA Headquarters,*

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SOVIET AGRO-INDUSTRIAL REORGANIZATION MAY BE FACING  
DIFFICULTIES [REDACTED]

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There are signs that plans for the creation of a supra-ministerial body for agro-industrial affairs, which President Brezhnev outlined at the party plenum last October, are becoming bogged down in bureaucratic wrangling. Conflicting statements by Soviet officials suggest that there is increasing uncertainty about what form the national agro-industrial complex will take, who will head it, and when it will be completed. [REDACTED]

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Leonid Yevenko, an economic specialist with the Institute for the USA and Canada, flatly told [REDACTED] that a state committee would be formed to administer the agro-industrial food program. In a more recent conversation, however, Pravda's agricultural journalist, Valeriy Boldin, insisted that no decision on this matter had been taken. Moreover, he expressed strong doubt that work on the program would be completed by the time the party congress convened on 23 February, as Brezhnev had urged. [REDACTED]

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Boldin further stated that, as an alternative to the creation of a new body such as a state committee, "some scholars" favor an expanded role for Gosplan in this area--a solution that would represent a considerable watering-down of Brezhnev's stated goal. Another proposal that the unified agro-industrial complex be coordinated at least initially through a beefed-up Ministry of Agriculture had appeared soon after the plenum. This disarray suggests a replay of the same bureaucratic infighting that helped stymie Brezhnev's earlier calls for ministerial reorganization. [REDACTED]

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There is also doubt now about who will administer the agro-industrial program. In December, when Moldavian party boss Ivan Bodyul was named a USSR deputy premier with unspecified responsibilities, it appeared that he had the inside track for the job. Bodyul has close ties

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KEY DOMESTIC ISSUES ON THE EVE OF THE SOVIET PARTY  
CONGRESS

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The state of the economy and the composition of the new central and regional party organs are the domestic issues of principal concern to the Soviet leadership as it completes preparations for the 26th Party Congress which convenes on 23 February. Available indications suggest that cadre turnover among regional party officials--the largest complement within the CPSU Central Committee--will be negligible. Oblast and city conferences have been completed and incumbent first secretaries have with few exceptions retained their positions, portending cadre stability both at the local level and in the regional contingents to be elected to the Central Committee in March. This contrasts with a significant cadre turnover during the last six months in the USSR Council of Ministers, the next largest component of the Central Committee, and this will result in a considerably changed government contingent in the new Central Committee. Agricultural reorganization appears to take precedence among the pressing economic issues. Recent regional plenums tended to focus on this question, rather than the more politically volatile cadre issue.

Stability Among First Secretaries

Reports on oblast and important city conferences throughout the USSR indicate that nearly all of the more important first secretaries have been reelected. In the Ukraine and Kazakhstan, which have two of the most powerful party organizations, no oblast first secretaries are reported as having been removed. More fragmentary information from the Russian Federation suggests an identical trend. Only the Orenburg first secretary has reportedly been replaced and he was transferred to Moscow in December to head the State Committee for Material Reserves and will retain his Central Committee seat. Information from the smaller republics is still incomplete. So far, however,

22 January 1981


24 December 1980

MEMORANDUM

FROM :   
OPA/USSR-EE/SRI

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SUBJECT: Soviet Leadership Developments

I have attached our most recent assessment of the Soviet leadership scene. It concludes that Brezhnev's position is very strong and that he seems intent on holding onto power as long as possible. Some attention is also given to what we might expect the post-Brezhnev succession to look like, but a more detailed analysis of this question will be found in the somewhat dated 1979 analysis "After Brezhnev: Muddling Through the Succession." 

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Attachment: A/S

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Soviets Prepare for the Party Congress

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Preparations for the 26th CPSU Congress, scheduled to open in Moscow next February, are proceeding in accordance with statutory requirements and established practice. During the intervening period Soviet officialdom will devote considerable time and energy to these preparations, diverting their attention from other tasks. As yet, there is no persuasive evidence that the increasingly decrepit Politburo is preparing for a new course in economic policy, or for a changing of the guard.

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The Precongress Buildup

In his speech to the June plenary meeting of the Central Committee, General Secretary Brezhnev announced the schedule of meetings that will culminate in the convening of the Congress and provided the agenda for the Congress itself. The first round of these meetings is already under way. The approximately 350,000 primary party organizations, which constitute the bottom rung of the party structure, are meeting this month and next to "elect" delegates--from a previously prepared list--to "represent" them at meetings of the district (raion) and city (gorod) party organizations, which comprise the next higher level in the hierarchy. The district and city meetings, to be held in November and December, will in turn select delegates to regional (oblast) or territorial (krai) conferences, scheduled for December and January. Congresses of the union republics, in turn, will meet in late January and early February. In each republic a Central Committee plenum has already announced the specific date for the republic congress. The meetings that take place before the CPSU Congress will also elect the new leaders for the party units concerned--that is, for the districts, cities, regions, territories,

18 September 1980

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